United Nations A/65/542

General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 October 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fifth session
Agenda items 36, 52 and 60

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Identical letters dated 25 October 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter from H.E. Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, dated 20 October 2010, addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, regarding the recent violations in the Occupied Syrian Golan (see annex).

I would highly appreciate it if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 36, 52 and 60.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 25 October 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

The Israeli occupying authorities are extracting water from Mas`adah Lake in the occupied Syrian Golan and diverting it to settlement farms. Albeit the reservoirs of those occupying authority settlements are full of water, water is being pumped from the lake into those reservoirs.

As a result of that Israeli measure, which contravenes international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, Syrian citizens in the Golan have sustained material losses that are estimated at some $20 million and are expected to increase by a further $10 million by the end of 2010. Those losses have been incurred by the loss of fish stocks and poor apple yields in the farms that are irrigated by Lake waters and the inadequacy of water for orchards. The Lake has been reduced in size by the extraction of its water, while the surrounding region is becoming desertified.

Mas`adah Lake contains some 7 million cubic metres of water, of which the occupying authorities sell a meagre amount to Syrian farmers in the Golan at exorbitant prices while most is reserved for the use of settlers. Overall, Syrian farmers have access to a mere 3.5 million cubic metres of all the water available in the occupied Syrian Golan, which Israel controls, at a cost of $3 million, while settlements pay a low fee that amounts to only $7 million for 34 million cubic metres.

We have made previous reference in our annual reports on Israeli practices in the Golan to the policies of the Israeli occupying authorities, which are deliberately designed to control the waters of the Golan and deny Syrian citizens their natural rights over their own water. This latest proceeding of the Israelis, namely, the extraction of the waters of Mas`adah Lake, constitutes an economic and environmental catastrophe of enormous proportions for Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan.

The action that Israel, the occupying Power, is pursuing in this area constitutes an infraction of international legitimacy and, in particular, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which affirm that Israel should withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, and a blatant violation of its obligations as occupying Power under the Geneva Conventions and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Israel's actions are, indeed, a violation of Security Council resolution 465 (1980), preambular paragraph 7, which calls upon Israel to take into account the need to consider measures for the impartial protection of private and public land and property, and water resources. Israeli actions are, furthermore, a violation of paragraph 5 of the aforementioned resolution, which determines that all measures taken by Israel to change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure or status of the Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity. Security Council resolution 497 (1981) confirms that those measures are null and void and without international legal effect.

Israel's persistence in its practices and creation of topographic changes on the ground once again expose its true motives and make it absolutely clear that it is

opposed to just and comprehensive peace in the region. Such behaviour demonstrates contempt for and constitutes a violation of international law, international humanitarian law, the four Geneva Conventions and the resolutions of international legitimacy.

The Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with the bases of international law and United Nations resolutions, demands that the General Assembly and the international community should assume their responsibility to prevent Israel from persisting in its sustained violations, with particular respect to the plundering of the natural resources of occupied Arab territories, including water in the occupied Syrian Golan.

We request circulation of the present letter as a United Nations General Assembly document under the following agenda items:

Item 36: The situation in the Middle East;

Item 52: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories; and

Item 60: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources.

(*Signed*) Walid **Al-Moualem**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic

Damascus, 20 October 2010